

Message Text

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PAGE 01 RANGOO 01077 251336Z

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ACTION EA-13

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ISO-00 SNM-02 CIAE-00 INR-10 NSAE-00

RSC-01 NSC-07 NSCE-00 L-02 H-01 AID-10 PM-03 TRSE-00

JUSE-00 IO-03 IGA-02 DODE-00 DEAE-00 OMB-01 SCI-03

SY-02 DRC-01 PRS-01 USIA-04 /081 W

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R 250908Z APR 74

FM AMEMBASSY RANGOON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7925

INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

C O N F I D E N T I A L RANGOON 1077

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: SNAR, BM

SUBJECT: NARCOTICS SUPPRESSION EQUIPMENT OFFER

REF: (A) STATE 57667; (B) RANGOON 581; (C) STATE 74949; (D)

STATE 76679; (E) BANGKOK 6283

1. SUMMARY. TWO RECENT CONVERSATIONS LEAD US TO BELIEVE GUB IS INCLINING TOWARD DECISION TO EXPLORE THROUGH FURTHER NEGOTIATIONS THE NARCOTICS SUPPRESSION EQUIPMENT PACKAGE, THOUGH IT IS STILL WORRYING ABOUT SEVERAL ASPECTS OF PROPOSAL. WE BELIEVE MOST OF THESE CAN BE RESOLVED WHEN AND IF GUB IS PREPARED TO BEGIN NEGOTIATIONS. AT SAME TIME, GUB REACTIONS THUS FAR INDICATE CLEARLY THAT IF WE EXPECT TO STRENGTHEN BURMESE CAPABILITIES TO INTERDICT FLOW OF NARCOTICS WE SHALL HAVE TO DO SO CLEANLY AND DECISIVELY, AND WITHOUT A LONG LIST OF CONDITIONS, QUESTIONS, AND UNNECESSARY DELAYS. END SUMMARY.

2. IN TWO RECENT CONVERSATIONS, SENIOR GUB OFFICIALS HAVE INDICATED THAT GUB REMAINS ACTIVELY INTERESTED IN HELICOPTERS FOR NARCOTICS SUPPRESSION, THOUGH STILL CONCERNED ABOUT POSSIBLE
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 RANGOO 01077 251336Z

"STRINGS" TO PROPOSAL. VICE-CHIEF OF STAFF (AIR) (BRIG. SAW

PRU) VOLUNTEERED TO AIRA THAT THEY WILL BE "GETTING TOGETHER" SOON TO DISCUSS EQUIPMENT PACKAGE, AND INDICATED WE COULD EXPECT TO BE INFORMED BY "THE OTHER SIDE OF THE HOUSE" (PRESUMABLY FOREIGN MINISTRY) WHEN GUB READY BEGIN NEGOTIATIONS.

3. A FEW DAYS LATER, IN CONVERSATION WITH ANOTHER EMBOFF, DIRECTOR-GENERAL NATIONAL INTELLIGENCE BUREAU (COL. TIN OO) WAS MORE RE-SERVED AND COMMENTED ON SOME POSSIBLE PROBLEMS WITH EQUIPMENT PACKAGE. HOWEVER, HE STRESSED USEFULNESS OF HELICOPTERS TO BURMA ARMY OPERATIONS AGAINST OPIUM CARAVANS. SUCH CARAVANS, HE POINTED OUT, NORMALLY TRAVEL IN RUGGED TERRAIN OF SHAN STATE WITH POINT AS MUCH AS TWO OR THREE MILES AHEAD OF MAIN BODY. WHEN POINT BECOMES AWARE OF BURMA ARMY PRESENCE, THE MAIN BODY SCATTERS WITH THE OPIUM. HELICOPTERS WOULD BE MOST USEFUL FOR RAPID DEPLOYMENT OF INTERCEPT FORCES. TIN OO LEFT OVER-ALL IMPRESSION HE FAVORS PACKAGE IN SPITE OF CONCERN OVER "STRINGS".

4. HE WAS CONCERNED, HOWEVER, ABOUT LENGTH OF TIME OVER WHICH DELIVERIES COULD BE EXPECTED. TIN OO SAID GUB FINDS IT STRANGE THAT A LARGE AND POWERFUL COUNTRY LIKE USA IS UNABLE TO COME UP WITH 12 OR 18 HELICOPTERS, INSTEAD OF STRINGING THEM OUT TWO OR THREE AT A TIME. HE SAID NO MATTER HOW THIS IS CHARACTERIZED IN AGREEMENT FROM THE OUTSIDE IT WILL LOOK LIKE USG DOLE WITH IMPLICATIONS AS TO CONDITIONS BASED ON CONTINUING REVIEW OF GUB PERFORMANCE AGAINST TRAFFICERS. TIN OO SAID THERE CAN BE NO QUESTION OF HIDING A USG GRANT FROM INTERNATIONAL ATTENTION, AND GUB DOES NOT OBJECT TO INITIAL ONE-TIME "PUBLICITY" ON JOINT USG-GUB ACTION AGAINST CARAVANS. BUT DELIVERY OF HELICOPTERS IN SMALL INVDEMENTS COULD LEAD TO A SERIES OF SUCH STORIES, CAUSING EMBARRASSMENT TO GUB'S NEUTRAL POSTURE.

5. EMBOFF POINTED OUT TIN OO MAY BE SEEING PROBLEMS WHERE NONE EXIST. USG SEEKS NO "PUBLICITY" FOR THE PROGRAM. ALTHOUGH INITIAL GRANT WOULD UNDOUBTEDLY ATTRACT SOME PRESS INTEREST, PRESS GUID-ANCE WOULD BE MATTER FOR USG AND GUB CONSULTATIONS. NOR WOULD WE EXPECT ANY ANNOUNCEMENTS OR "PUBLICITY" OVER DELIVERIES OF SUB-SEQUENT INCREMENTS. EMBOFF ALSO EMPHASIZED USG SEEKS NO SPECIAL LEVERAGE BY STRINGING OUT DELIVERIES. HELICOPTERS ARE POPULAR ITEMS OF EQUIPMENT, AND BURMA PROGRAM WOULD BE FORCED TO TAKE ITS PLACE IN LINE AT FACTORY ALONG WITH OTHER HIGH-PRIORITY PROGRAMS.

CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 03 RANGOO 01077 251336Z

6. AS WE HAVE DONE BEFORE (REF B), EMBOFF URGED TIN OO TO ENTER INTO NEGOTIATIONS TO CLEAR UP ANY MISUNDERSTANDINGS GUB MAY HAVE. TIN OO SAID THERE WERE MANY FACTORS TO CONSIDER AND HE WOULD HAVE TO CONSULT FURTHER WITH SAW PRU BEFORE ANY FINAL CONCLUSIONS REACHED.

7. COMMENT: IT SEEMS CLEAR FROM THESE AND EARLIER CONVERSATIONS

(REF B) THAT THERE IS A GUB CONSENSUS (SUBJECT TO THE FAIRLY REMOTE POSSIBILITY OF BEING OVERRULED BY NE WIN) THAT BURMA NEEDS AND WANTS THE EQUIPMENT WE ARE PREPARED TO SUPPLY. THIS BASIC POSITION SHOULD NOT BE OBSCURED BY THE CONTINUING AND UNDERSTANDABLE BURMESE SENSITIVITY TO CONDITIONS WHICH MIGHT ATTACH TO THE EQUIPMENT PACKAGE AND ITS IMPLEMENTATION.

8. THIS SENSITIVITY, HOWEVER, REINFORCES EMBASSY'S INITIAL VIEWS THAT IF WE EXPECT BY SUPPLYING AIRCRAFT TO STRENGTHEN BURMESE CAPABILITY TO INTERDICT NARCOTICS FLOW WE SHALL HAVE TO MAKE SUCH SUPPLY AS QUICK, SIMPLE, AND FREE OF COMPLICATIONS AS POSSIBLE. THUS, THERE ARE DOUBTLESS GOOD REASONS WHY WE CANNOT COME UP WITH 12 OR 18 AIRCRAFT IN ONE INCREMENT, BUT WE SHALL NEED TO BE ABLE TO EXPLAIN TO GUB IN CAREFUL DETAIL WHY THIS IS SO.

9. IN PARTICULAR, WE CANNOT EXPECT IN NEGOTIATIONS OR SUBSEQUENTLY TO EMBARK ON THE KIND OF MINUTE INQUIRY ENVISAGED BY REF D (M-16'S FOR THAI BPP). WE EXPECT TO GET FROM GUB ADEQUATE INFORMATION TO ALLOW US TO ASSESS STANDARDS OF MAINTENANCE AND OPERATIONAL USE OF ANY AIRCRAFT WE PROVIDE, BUT WE WILL GET SUCH INFORMATION AS A MATTER OF DAY-TO-DAY LIAISON, PERSONAL CONTACT, AND ESTABLISHED COOPERATION ON NARCOTICS PROBLEMS--NOT AS A CONDITION TO THE SUPPLY OF EQUIPMENT.

10. WE THINK IT LIKELY WE WILL HAVE GUB ANSWER BEFORE JUNE 30, BUT WE DO NOT EXPECT TO BE ABLE TO CONCLUDE AN AGREEMENT OR OBLIGATE FUNDS BEFORE THAT DATE.

11. GUB HAS NOT REACTED TO OR COMMENTED UPON WOLFF REPORT (REF C), AND WE HAVE NOT RAISED SUBJECT.
OSBORN

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